## ***The Status of Commenting on the Qur'aan on the Basis of one's Opinion***

**Question:** The trend is starting in Europe, America and Canada to comment on the Qur'aan on the basis of people's personal opinions. Male and female university students get together and a verse is read out. Someone may then read from a Tafseer such as *Tafheemul Qur'aan* and then ask, "Professor! What is your opinion on this verse?" or "Doctor! What is your opinion on this verse?" or "Sister! What is your opinion on this verse?" This they do in the name of Qur'aanic lessons. What is the ruling of the Shari'ah concerning commenting on the Qur'aan on the basis of one's opinion? Is this method of commenting on the Qur'aan on the basis of one's opinion correct? Please reply in detail and with references. I intend printing the reply in large quantities and distributing it throughout Europe, America and Canada.

**Answer:** The method of studying the Qur'aan that you describe is really not a study of the Qur'aan, but adulteration of the Qur'aan, as predicted by Hadhrat Mu'aadh bin Jabal τ, when he said, "A time of corruption will start soon after you when the Qur'aan will be commonly read. In fact, a Mu'min and Munaafiq, man and woman, elder and youngster, slave and freeman will all be able to recite it (and regard themselves as experts). A person will then say, 'Why do people not follow me when I have studied the Qur'aan. They will perhaps not follow me until I do not invent something new (present a personal and new opinion of the Qur'aan).'" Hadhrat Mu'aadh τ then warned, "Stay away from initiating new Bid'ah practices because every Bid'ah leads to deviation."[1]

The person who comments on the Qur'aan on the basis of his opinion is the most deviated of people and in the words of the Hadith, he is "deviated and deviates others as well". There is a great fear that he may lose his Imaan before he dies.

The Qur'aan declares about Rasulullaah ρ, ***"He does not speak of his own desires. (Rather) Whatever he says is revelation (which Allaah has) revealed to him."***[2]

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[1] Abu Dawood. See *Badhlul Majhood* (Vol.5 Pg.191).
[2] Surah Najm, verses 3-4.

The Qur'aan is an extremely comprehensive and complete book. By any person's definition, this does not mean that the Qur'aan does not need to be taught and explained. If it could be understood without the need for a Nabi ρ, the coming of Rasulullaah ρ would be futile. The Qur'aan would then have been sent to earth and people would practise on it by themselves. However, this was not the case. Allaah's angel Hadhrat Jibra'eel υ taught the Qur'aan to Rasulullaah ρ, who in turn put it into practise for the Sahabah ψ to learn. This is implied in the verse: **"He (Rasulullaah ρ) has been taught by one of tremendous might (Hadhrat Jibra'eel υ)..."**[1]

Just as the Qur'aan defines the role of Rasulullaah ρ as someone who ***"recites to them His verses (of the Qur'aan), purifies them"*** , it also adds a further purpose of Rasulullaah ρ's coming, which is that he ***"teaches them the Book (Qur'aan) and wisdom (the Sunnah)."***[2] Allaah says in another verse: "***We have revealed the Reminder (the Qur'aan) to you (O Muhammad ε) so that you may explain to the people what (injunctions of the Shari'ah) has been revealed to them..."***[3]

In fulfilling this duty, Rasulullaah ρ elucidated the verses of the Qur'aan and these were in turn conveyed to the Ummah by the Sahabah ψ, especially by the Khulafaa Raashideen and other experts of the Qur'aan such as Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ, Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood τ, Hadhrat Ubay bin Ka'b τ, Hadhrat Zaid bin Thaabit τ, Hadhrat Abu Moosa Ash'ari τ, Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Zubayr τ and others. Hadhrat Ali τ who is called 'the gateway to knowledge' said, "I swear by Allaah that there has not been a single verse revealed about which I do not know about whom it was revealed or where it was revealed." Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood τ said words akin to this. Hadhrat Ali τ also said, "Allaah has blessed me with an understanding heart and a researching tongue." Because of this, he would always ask Rasulullaah ρ questions. This tells us that together with an astute understanding and intelligence, one still requires a teacher to get proper guidance.

Hadhrat Masrooq رحمه الله who was a student of Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood τ said, "Hadhrat Abdullaah τ would recite a Surah to us and then spend the entire day narrating to us (relevant) Ahadeeth and

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[1] Surah Najm, verse 5.
[2] Surah Aal Imraan, verse 164.
[3] Surah Nahl, verse 44.

explaining it to us."[1] Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood τ is accepted as the Sahabi whose knowledge of the Qur'aan was most profound.[2]

The knowledge of the Sahabah ψ was acquired from the fountainhead of all knowledge, Rasulullaah ρ himself. The time they spent with Rasulullaah ρ gave them such a deep understanding of matters and it created such radiance within them that they became yardsticks for judging truth from falsehood. It is for this reason that the pious predecessors gave great importance to the knowledge of the Sahabah ψ and would always seek to know what the Sahabah ψ had to say about any matter. As soon as they learnt this, they would adopt it as a paradigm. If the Sahabah ψ were divided on the mater, the opinion of either party would be adopted. Opting for a third opinion was regarded as deviation.

When Hadhrat Muhammad bin Seereen رحمه الله an eminent *Taabi'ee* was asked about an injunction of Hajj, he replied, "Hadhrat Umar τ and Hadhrat Uthmaan τ disliked it. Had this been from their knowledge, then their knowledge is greater than mine and had it been their opinions, then their opinions are better than mine."[3]

Look how such a great scholar regarded his knowledge and opinions to be nothing in comparison to that of the Sahabah ψ, whereas modern-thinkers of today regard themselves to be in no need for the knowledge and reasoning of the pious predecessors.

Hadhrat Imaam Awzaa'ee رحمه الله said to one of his students by the name of Baqiyyah bin Waleed رحمه الله, "O Baqiyyah! True knowledge is that which has come from the Sahabah ψ of Rasulullaah ρ. Everything else is not really knowledge."[4]

Hadhrat Aamir Sha'bi رحمه الله said, "Accept whatever people report to you from the Sahabah ψ of Rasulullaah ρ and reject what they report to you based on their opinions."[5]

There are numerous other quotations like these that tell us about the weight the pious predecessors attached to the knowledge of the Sahabah ψ. Why did they do this? The reason is that just as the Sunnah

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[1] *Tabari* (Vol.1 Pg.17).
[2] *Isti'aab* (Vol.1 Pg.373).
[3] *Jaami Bayaanil Ilm* (Vol.2 Pg.31).
[4] *Jaami Bayaanil Ilm* (Vol.2 Pg.29).
[5] *Jaami Bayaanil Ilm* (Vol.2 Pg.32).

explains the intent of the Qur'aanic verses, so too does the words and deeds of the Sahabah ψ explain the intent of the Sunnah. If the words of the Sahabah ψ are reported from Rasulullaah ρ, then it is obvious that no words can be better than his and if they are the opinions of the Sahabah ψ, then whose opinion can be better than theirs?

The gist of it all is that it is impossible to understand the true meaning and intent of the Qur'aan when one shelves the Ahadeeth, the sayings of the Sahabah ψ who attained the benefit of Rasulullaah ρ's company and those of the pious predecessors. It is for this reason that Rasulullaah ρ himself forbade commenting on the Qur'aan on the basis of one's personal opinion. Rasulullaah ρ said, "Whoever comments on the Qur'aan without acquiring (the relevant) knowledge should prepare for his abode in Jahannam."[1] In his commentary of this Hadith, Hadhrat Mulla Ali Qaari رحمه الله says[2], "There is fear that such a person will become a Kaafir."

Rasulullaah ρ also said, "When a person comments on the Qur'aan on the basis of his personal opinion, he will be wrong even though he may be right (by coincidence)."[3]

The importance of commenting on the Qur'aan can be judged by the fact that masters in the field stipulate, a person needs to master fifteen sciences before attempting to comment on the Qur'aan. Just as a person diving for pearls needs all the required expertise and equipment to gather them, so too, the one diving to reach the meanings of the Qur'aan also need the necessary expertise and tools. These sciences are:

1. Knowledge of Philology
2. Knowledge of Arabic grammar
3. Knowledge of Arabic syntax and etymology
4. Knowledge of Arabic semantics
5. Knowledge of figures of speech
6. Knowledge of the rhetoric

   The three sciences mentioned last constitute the Knowledge of *Balaagah*, which is essential in grasping the miraculous nature of the Qur'aan

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[1] Tirmidhi, as quoted in *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.35).
[2] *Mirqaat* (Vol.1 Pg.191).
[3] *Mishkaatul Masaabeeh* (Pg.35).

7. Knowledge of *Tajweed* and *Qiraa'ah*
8. Knowledge of Aqaa'id
9. Knowledge of the priciples of Islaamic jurisprudence
10. Knowledge of the background to the revelation of the various verses
11. Knowledge of which verses were abrogated and of those that abrogated them
12. Knowledge of Islaamic jurisprudence
13. Knowledge of inheritance and mathematics
14. Knowledge of the Ahadeeth that explain verses of the Qur'aan
15. The special knowledge that comes directly from Allaah and which He gives only to His special servants[1]

The above is the great status that the pious predecessors gave to the science of commenting and interpreting the Qur'aan. On the contrary, we have people like those conducting these lessons and the author of *Tafheemul Qur'aan*, who says:

1. "In this (*Tafheemul Qur'aan*), I have made an attempt to write those things that came to my mind while reading the Qur'aan and the effects that it made on me. These I have narrated almost verbatim."[2]
2. "This method of learning has to be abandoned. While studying the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth is given the most preference, it is not derived from the old collection of books …"[3] Here he is referring to the well known and accepted books such as Bukhaari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Nasa'ee, Ibn Maajah, Mu'atta Imaam Maalik, Tafseer Ibn Katheer, Mazhari, Ruhul M'aani, Baydaawi, etc. He claims that they are useless and should be discarded and one should freely interpret the Qur'aan without them. He therefore says, "There is no need for a commentary of the Qur'aan. A highly qualified professor is enough."[4]

Hadhrat Umar τ once asked Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ, "Why should the Ummah differ when their Nabi ρ is one, their Qibla is one and their Qur'aan is one?" Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Abbaas τ replied, "O Ameerul Mu'mineen! The Qur'aan was revealed before us (the Sahabah ψ) and we therefore knew the circumstances of revelation. There will

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[1] *Shari'at wa Tareeqat* (abridged).
[2] *Tarjumaanul Qur'aan*, Muharram 1361 A.H.
[3] *Tanqeehaat* Pg.126.
[4] *Tanqeehaat* Pg.222.

however come people who will read the Qur'aan without understanding the circumstances of revelation and they will then start commenting by their personal opinions and will merely guess. This will cause the differences. When this starts, wars will also start."[1]

Speaking about his contemplation on the Qur'aan, Allaama Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله says, "I sometimes research hundreds of explanations concerning a single verse and then plead to Allaah to make understand it saying, 'O The Teacher of Aadam υ and Ibraheem υ, teach me.' I would also go to deserted Masaajid and similar places where I would rub my head in the sand and say, 'O The Teacher of Aadam υ and Ibraheem υ, teach me.'"[2]

Imagine the reliance a great scholar like Allaama Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله had on the knowledge of the pious predecessors that he would research hundreds of their commentaries of the Qur'aan. Yet the same works that he researched are now regarded as an 'old collection of books' by certain people!

Allaama Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله has also lauded the knowledge and understanding of the pious predecessors and emphasised that they must be followed. He says, "It is Waajib (compulsory) for the Muslims to love other people of Imaan after Allaah and His Rasool ρ because this is mentioned in the Qur'aan. Those to be especially loved are the Ulema who are really the heirs of the Ambiyaa عليهم السلام and whom Allaah has described as guiding stars by whom direction is found in the darkness. All Muslims are unanimous about the fact that these are the people who are guided and have insight. Whereas the Ulema of the previous Ummahs turned out to be the worst of the people, the Ulema of this Ummah are the best of them because they are all the deputies of Rasulullaah ρ. They revive the Sunnah practices of Rasulullaah ρ and are the beauty and flag-bearers of the Qur'aan. They are the interpreters and commentators of the Qur'aan and the Qur'aan is always on their tongues and a proof for them. It should be remembered that none of the Imaams whom people generally follow and rely on (the four Imaams of jurisprudence) ever intentionally opposed any minor or major Sunnah of Rasulullaah ρ because they were unanimous about the fact that it is Waajib (compulsory) to follow the Sunnah of Rasulullaah ρ

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[1] *I'tisaam* Pg.157.
[2] *Uqoodud Durriyya* pg.26.

and that he was the only one whose words and instructions have to be accepted…”[1]

**To summarise:** It is of utmost importance to stay away from the gathering described, otherwise one’s beliefs and actions will be corrupted. One will then be a deviate who leads others astray as well. In fact, it is not even permissible to associate with such people once it is apparent that they are deviates. Allaah says: ***“And do not incline towards (do not associate with and do not imitate) those who do wrong, for then the Fire (of Jahannam) shall reach you and you will not have any helpers (to save you) against (the punishment of) Allaah and you will not be assisted (by anyone).”***[2]

Another verse states: ***“Should Shaytaan cause you to forget (to stay in their company), then after recalling (the command to leave them), do not sit with the unjust people.”***[3]

Wise men have always said, “Evil habits spread and the disposition of people are the greatest of thieves” (because they so quickly pick up evil habits and thoughts). And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

May Allaah save us from such evils and keep us steadfast on the straight path, which is that of Rasulullaah ρ and the Sahabah ψ.
3 Jumaadath Thaani 1399 A.H.

[1] *Taareekh Da’wah wa Azeemah* (Vol.2 Pg.101-102).
[2] Surah Hood, verse 113.
[3] Surah An’aam, verse 68.